



Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NIEER: Georgia Pre-K Quality among Best in the Nation

***Georgia joins only four other states in attaining 10 quality benchmarks;
Ranks fourth in the nation for enrollment***

ATLANTA, Ga., (April 10, 2012) – The National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) released it's *The State of Preschool 2011: State Preschool Yearbook* today showing Georgia among only four other states attaining 10 quality standard benchmarks for its Pre-K program as it improved teacher qualifications and remained fourth in the nation for enrollment. The other states were Alabama, Alaska, North Carolina, and Rhode Island.

NIEER evaluates programs on three criteria: access, quality and resources. Access rankings are comprised of the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds in the state who are enrolled in the state pre-K program. Quality is judged by state policies requiring 10 minimum research-based Quality Standards Benchmarks, including teacher education levels, small class sizes, and manageable student-to-teacher ratios. Finally, states' resources are based on the amount spent per child in the program. Sixty-six percent of all four-year-olds in Georgia were served by state Pre-K and Head Start in the 2010-2011 school years, with a statewide Pre-K enrollment of nearly 83,000.

The landmark national report caps 10 years of research by NIEER, a unit of the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. The first state to adopt a goal of voluntary Pre-K for all children, Georgia showed strong progress in improving the quality of early education over the last decade while maintaining access.

“We are very pleased with Georgia’s ranking in this new *Preschool Yearbook* and believe it is a reflection of our overall commitment to Pre-K and early education, from Governor Deal and our State Legislature to the outstanding educators who work with our youngest learners each day,” said Bobby Cagle, commissioner for the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. “We appreciate the Governor’s efforts in adding ten additional school days for 170 instruction days beginning next fall.”

“We continually work on setting standards that ensure Georgia’s Pre-K offers the highest quality programs for children and families,” said Susan Adams, assistant commissioner for Pre-K with the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning. “Achieving all ten of the NIEER standards validates the hard work we have been doing across the state.”

The *Yearbook* findings include NIEER’s data over the past ten years, national trends in Pre-K programs and recommendations for policymakers.

The NIEER study follows a report released earlier this year by the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) showing Georgia dramatically improving its score and ranking in small family child care home standards and oversight policies. Georgia scored 84 percent on the basic requirements needed to ensure that children are safe and in settings that promote healthy development. The state ranked 11th in the nation, significantly improving from 38th place in 2010.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia’s children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia’s Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.